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An impartial account of the life  
of the Rev. John Newland Maffitt.

1848

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AN  
IMPARTIAL ACCOUNT  
OF THE LIFE OF THE  
**REV. JOHN N. MAFFITT,**  
WITH A NARRATIVE OF THE  
**Difficulties Attending His First Marriage.**



John N. Maffitt, from a Steel Engraving published in 1826.

AND A  
**Circumstantial & Correct History**  
**OF ALL THE FACTS**  
OF HIS LATE MARRIAGE TO MISS SMITH, OF BROOKLYN, AND THE  
CAUSES OF HER DEATH,

With many Particulars never before Published.

"Nothing extenuate, or set down aught in malice."—*Shakespeare.*

WITH PORTRAITS.

BY MOSES ELSEMORE,

Author of "*Reflections on the State of Society in the South-West*;" "*Essay on the  
Genius and Writings of Lord Byron*," &c., &c.

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NEW YORK:  
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1848.

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Some years afterwards, his wife and children followed him to the New World; but whether of their own accord, allured by the report of his success, or at his solicitation, the author is not prepared to specify. His career at the time of their arrival tended southwards. A transient reconciliation, as usual in similar cases, led to more bitter feelings, and a final severance for ever. He kept on his splendid way, moving in affluence, and cheered by idolatrous flatteries, while she and her children found an humble home in New Orleans, and ultimately in Galveston.

In this new home Mrs. Maffit displayed unconquerable energy. Through her own unassisted exertions, her small private boarding-house grew rapidly into a fashionable hotel. Her son was provided for by an honorable post in the naval service. Her two daughters were educated in the polite accomplishments common to the higher classes. They were, indeed, both of exceeding beauty, possessed much of their father's innate poetry of soul, and finally married wealthy and respectable men, in the sunny land of their adoption; the one finding an excellent husband in Judge Johnson of Brazoria, the other in a Captain of the United States Navy.

It has been asserted by his enemies, "that Maffit justified the separation from his first wife by circulating reports injurious to her reputation; that he strove to hunt her down by calumnies and ceaseless persecution." This is all a naked assertion. Not one particle of proof to that effect has ever yet been offered to the public. We have specified above the real cause of the rupture; his jealous, exacting disposition, and her intolerable temper, causes involuntary on both their parts. For the rest, as to the whole unfortunate affair, the husband always preserved a marble silence, never alluding to it even among his most intimate friends; while the wife was ever both bitter and loud in denouncing the former partner of her bed. But as to who was most to blame, perhaps only one Being in the wide universe knoweth that—*He* who will judge between them at the last day. We are fully sensible, that such a meagre, ambiguous account as we have given of the matter, will be unsatisfactory to many. The majority of mankind delight in the stimulus of fiery censure. You must stir the cup of denunciation strong, as well as fill it full, to please their palates; not because they are naturally malicious, but because they have contracted the habit of feeding on deep excitements. They prefer *truth*, to be sure, all other things being equal; yet they want it mixed with something to rouse the blood, and cause it to boil with indignation and passion. They forget that the cherubic eyes of celestial charity, have an insight into nature and life, keener as well as warmer, than the cold, snake-like vision of venomous hatred, that monstrous birth of hell, which burrows among the tombs of the dead, and sustains its bloated being on the moral cancers of the living.

During more than half a dozen years, after the culmination of Maffit's star in the American Hemisphere, his labors were principally confined to New England. His occasional visits to the chief cities of the South and West, form unimportant exceptions to the truth of this general statement. There was not a single large town in the North which escaped the whirlwind everywhere raised by his eloquence. The fact is singular, and requires a more special explanation. His fame being even then co-extensive with the country, his brethren of the Methodist denomination had learned, that his presence in a given place, never failed to bring, as a necessary consequence, an accompanying "revival." Hence, everywhere an urgent anxiety existed to procure his services. Did backsliding abound in a given city, a total dearth of excitement? The leading members of the church would call a council, raise a subscription to the amount of hundreds of dollars, and send for Maffit. If not engaged he was sure to come, and "the awakening" as surely came with him. Was there an excitement already kindled? they wrote for Maffit to hasten and blow the feeble flame into a tempestuous conflagration. Sometimes the ministerial fees offered the orator, in these countless invitations, were not sufficiently large to please him, and he would write back stating the objection; when the faithful flock would strain every nerve to increase the premium as high as he demanded. It was in this way that he visited Providence, New York, Boston, Hartford, and other localities too numerous to be now mentioned, not once only, but some of them a dozen times, and every time with the same success.

In "the Athens of America," in the year 1822, his private character was attacked by Joseph T. Buckingham, then editor of the *New England Galaxy*, through the



columns of that journal. The charge related to improper gallantries. The Orator instituted a suit for libel, in which he obtained a verdict with trifling damages. The charge was brought up before the ensuing annual Conference, and Maffit declared, after the fullest investigation, free from guilt. Yet, notwithstanding these two acquittals, many persons to this day persist in believing the allegations contained in "the Galaxy;" and thus we see, that whether innocent or guilty, the man (and more particularly the clergyman,) who has the misfortune to be defamed, is always a loser. For character is made of a stuff so exceedingly fragile, that it will not do to be handled; or rather, it resembles those beautiful and delicate mirrors of exquisite polished steel, which the lightest breath cannot touch without soiling.

## CHAPTER II.

### MAFFIT'S CAREER IN THE SOUTH AND WEST—HIS CHAPLAINCY— SOCIETY AT WASHINGTON CITY.

MAFFIT'S first appearance in the South-west was on that exciting theatre, more than all others suited to the peculiar bent of his genius, a camp-meeting in the open air. This occurred about ten years ago. The site was a beautiful dell, in view of the Cumberland River, and some dozen miles from Nashville. The extraordinary *religious* drama, then and there performed, will not be forgotten while one living witness is left to relate its singular, and in many respects deeply interesting scenes.

The people, the place, the time, the occasion—in truth, all things were favorable to the advent of the eloquent stranger, and promised him his most magnificent success. To render this evident, a few words of explanation, as to the character of society and of sects, and more especially as to that strange phenomenon, a genuine *Western* revival, may be necessary.

It is known to all the world, that the inhabitants of those new States, more immediately under the warming influence of a southern sun, and surrounded by social circumstances, very different from those obtaining in older and better organized communities, are fiery, inflammable—susceptible to sudden impulses. From this, results their passion for war, the prevalence of duelling, and street-fighting. Happier effects, flowing from the same cause, may be seen in the witchery of their wild extemporaneous eloquence; in the intensity of their political contests of party; and we hope it will give no offence to add, in the number, the fervor, and fury of their *Religious Revivals*. Stirring excitement is a necessity of their nature. They must breathe an atmosphere of strong stimulants. Mental intoxication has become a fixed habit of their being.

Out of the cities, means of gratifying such a disposition, save at the quadrennial elections for chief Magistrate of the Nation, are extremely limited. They have no theatres, no cheap literature, no Sunday papers, to feed their appetite, for the horrible; duels are gradually growing unfashionable; affrays are sometimes scarce; and the races, and the courts of criminal sessions come round only twice in the year.

In the absence of all these, a Revival is truly a godsend; not in a theological or poetic sense, but in sober reality—as much so as a copious rain in seasons of the greatest drought. Not more numerous, not more eager is the crowd of ravens collected by the dead carcass, than the thick human throng attracted to the grand scene of devotion. If the *pious* only were to be found there, the affair would admit of a wholly different construction. But the case is not so. On the contrary, triflers, loafers of every description—the gay, the brightest stars of fashion, as well as gamblers, drunkards, petty pilferers, and all the Negroes who can either beg or buy the privilege of going—all are in attendance without stint, flocking to see,

hear, and drink their fill of the "waters of life;" or perchance of the vicious wine, brewed in the reeking still of unnatural excitements, by the furnace-fires of enthusiasm!

Men, and even women, have been known to journey on foot half a hundred miles, for the purpose of gazing on the intoxicating spectacle. When the rumor reaches the towns, villages, and distant gorges in the hills and mountains, that a "grand stir" actually has broken out, at a given *locality*, there is witnessed a universal rush in such direction, to glut the insatiable curiosity of the masses, greedy ever of gorgeous novelties.

Nor is the sanctuary in such cases always the principal focus of attraction. While the devout are preaching and praying *within* the encampment, *without*, and not beyond the sound of echo, ensconced in the shade of sheltering bushes, a choice variety of by-plays are *progressing*. The whiskered gambler shuffles his cards; drunken Bacchanals of both sexes, enjoy their obscene orgies; or it may be in single pairs, plot elopements that soon will gain a niche in the newspaper temple of public notoriety. Love is sometimes whispered even under the dew-dropping eaves of the altar!

We must not omit to mention, that the Negroes usually congregate after dark, some two hundred yards from the precincts of the camp-ground, and never fail to get up a particular *revival of their own*; where, to use a backwood's phrase, they commonly *overdo the thing*, burn an extra quantity of sulphur in their sermons, and thus render the atmosphere too hot for either their own health or the comfort of others. In fact, they become so boisterous as the noon of night approaches, that their deafening clamor generally disturbs the whites; then they must be ordered to remove farther off. Sometimes a second, or even third removal, for like reasons, becomes necessary.

The camp-ground is the place of annual festival in the South and West. The wealthy tent-holders vie with one another, in loading their tables with costly furniture and sumptuous fare. The beaux and belles put on their most showy attire. For every one well knows that the gayest glitter in such an immense concourse, where all go as well to see as to be seen, will be the subject of conversation for the ensuing twelve months.

The camp-ground is also the spot for a general re-union of friends and relatives. Those who reside too remote, or have not, from other causes, opportunities for exchanging visits, look anxiously forwards to this appointed month, as the period of certain meeting. Lovers, whose matrimonial wishes are thwarted by parents and guardians, are secure of a sly glance or stolen whisper here; or perhaps an interview by starlight, that frequently ends in a flight to the dwelling of the nearest justice of the peace!

And thus we discover, that apart from its inseparable *revival*, the camp-meeting has other various and numerous charms for the senses and souls of the multitude. Like the theatres in cities, it embraces an epitome of the universe in its vicinity. Like the theatre, it is the central point of public amusement. It has become a saying in those regions: "If you want any particular person, go to the camp-meeting and you cannot miss him." The camp-ground is the theatre of the woods, where opera and tragedy are much in vogue, and comedy comes as a matter of course.

We will add a word as to the cardinal exercises, which give the occasion the name of "revival."

Commonly after night when the first sermon is finished, a strong and enthusiastic appeal, in the form of vehement exhortation, is made to the sinners, followed by a call for mourners to come into the altar, which is a quadrangular pen or space, inclosed with wooden railings, immediately in front of the pulpit or platform on which the preacher stands when sermonizing.

Gradually the inclosure becomes filled. The penitents, as they enter, kneel down on clean straw or hay spread for the purpose. They are now said to be in a state of *conviction*. Some are even overpowered by their emotions to such a degree as to fall headlong on the earth, and there sometimes remain all the live-long night, without any signs of life, other than a painful breathing, or suppressed and agonizing groans! None are allowed to enter the consecrated precincts but ministers, class-leaders, the friends of the *convicted*, and some *select ladies*, gifted

in prayer, or in some other way favorites of those who conduct the meeting. These pray, sing hymns, and in low murmurs encourage the mourners to persevere in their efforts. This is termed "laboring in the altar," and is often protracted till sunrise. If the excitement be lively, as it scarcely ever fails to be, every few minutes some penitent will spring up from the straw to his feet, and break forth into shouts as vociferous as his lungs will permit, which commonly continue till his strength is completely exhausted, when his friends bear him away to the tent. And this is called "conversion," or more properly "getting religion." Frequently also the Saints themselves give utterance to the boisterous shouts of rejoicing above alluded to. The writer has seen fifty men, women, and occasionally mere children, exclaiming at once, producing a babel of discordant sounds, that beggared all description.

We have specified the inflammable impulsive character of the people, in those latitudes, as one cause of the phenomenon of revivals. We do not mean to say that it is the sole cause: we simply register facts; but spend no opinion as to *spiritual* agencies. We give the human, not the divine element in the religion of the South-west. And our hypothesis is confirmed by the tacit admission of the clergy themselves, who are frequently heard to lament, "that the years of a presidential canvass are extremely barren of revivals." In fine, leaving out of view the *supernatural*, with which the Muse of secular History deals not, the fiery hearts of such a population must have some sort of vent, or safety-valve, to let off superfluous steam; and the shifting and eventful drama of a camp-meeting revival, answers the purpose full as well as any other.

Ten years ago, last September, if the author remembers correctly, a sort of mammoth camp-meeting was appointed to be held, in a picturesque and highly romantic situation, near the Cumberland River, a dozen miles from Nashville. Expectation stood on tip-toe; for rumor had circulated the fact far and near, "that the celebrated Methodist orator, John Newland Maffit, would be in attendance." The desire of all classes to hear him was intense, since he had long filled a considerable space in the eulogies of the public press, at the north and east; and excerpts and beautiful quotations from his sermons and prayers had been circulated over the land, from Maine to Louisiana. Hence the popular fancy revelled in anticipation on the riches of a feast of jewels, stars, rainbows, and all that gaudy, glittering imagery, which constitutes the imaginative orator's peculiar capital and stock in trade.

The crowd that gathered on the occasion was immense, beyond any ever before witnessed, in the recollection of the oldest settlers, and embraced not only the people of the country, but some of the urban aristocracy from the chief city in the State, among whom bevy of fashionable ladies moved, dispensing smiles, and receiving more grateful flatteries in return.

Nor was the public curiosity by any means disappointed. Such an excitement has, perhaps, never been seen in the history of revivals. It began with Maffit's first sermon, and increased rather than diminished during two successive weeks, and then the meeting adjourned; not because the whirlwind of that magic eloquence had spent its force, but for the reason that nothing in the shape of resistance was left on which it could operate. The cunning of the artist remained; and he only ceased to *labor* when he had no more *material* to be *worked up*.

The scenes of that remarkable awakening resembled romance more than reality. As soon as the report of what was going on spread around the country, as it did like fire in the prairies, fresh crowds came pouring in. Many of these were of the *elite* of Nashville, and all were held spell-bound by the magnetism of the wondrous man's bewitching words, the fascination of his voice and manner. Hundreds of them professed *conversion*, many of them being distinguished for their influence, and some eminent also for learning and talents.

It must be confessed, however, that the excitement was far more prevalent among the ladies than with the gentlemen. The vortex of the storm defined itself especially in the hearts of the women. In this particular, however, that revival differed in no respect from others of a similar character. And the fact admits an explanation, not derogatory either to the intellect of the sex, or the merit of such religious manifestations. In the nature of women, worship is an unconquerable instinct, in whatever form the emotion may seek development. In

addition, the fair creature has more fancy than man—more pity, pathos, and vivid conception. Hence she is much more easily moved by brilliant imagery and the poetry of eloquence; in short by the particular species of eloquence which Maffit possesses in such an extraordinary degree.

We think the foregoing a much more probable cause of the orator's *spiritual* success among the ladies, than that other one, assigned by certain *profane* wits, during the excitement of which we are treating—to wit: "that *brother* Maffit's labors in the altar were confined exclusively to the young and fair of the softer sex!" The fact is true, but the inference uncharitable; or else, in common justice, it should be extended to the leaders in all similar excitements. For we venture the assertion, that if any disinterested spectator attend and carefully criticise the proceedings at a large camp-meeting, he will find that the pretty faces in the altar very much monopolise the labors of the ministry. The rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed beings will receive a double portion of even unnecessary attention, while the ugly, shabby-dressed specimens of the masculine gender, only a few feet off, are allowed to roll and groan like horses with the colic, *unprayed*, "unhonored, and unsung!" Yet who would dare accuse the pious preachers, that show such apparently unjust partiality, of any vicious or sensual designs against their lovely charges? The whole may be accounted for on a principle perfectly plain, and still free from the taint of criminality. Beauty is a load-star that will and must *attract* notice, if nothing more. "Beauty in distress," the favorite theme of natural poetry and romance, is a sight to arouse all the devotion and chivalrous feelings in man's nature; and we can conceive no reason why, or possibility by which ministers should be exempt from the operation of this universal disposition, innate to all humanity! The facts of all experience prove at least *they are not*.

The writer was present at the great camp-meeting near Nashville, and never shall he be able to forget one of its scenes, acted on the second Sunday night. Maffit had closed one of his happiest efforts. His peroration was brilliant as a shower of falling stars, and the effect produced, indescribable. For fifteen minutes before he took his seat, grey-headed men might be seen trembling like leaves in a rushing wind; and beautiful maidens, with jewelled hair, were heard to shriek as if in the presence of a ghost from eternity! All was terror and a tempest of confusion. The altar became crowded to suffocation; but still it could not hold half the mourners. Strong men were stricken down where they stood; and many of both sexes, who fled for safety from their own emotions to the camps, fell down overpowered by the way. Screams for mercy issued from all directions in the surrounding woods, whither those had gone who preferred seeking God in solitude, to the noise and tumult of the altar.

The cries of despair, the shouts of rejoicing, the glare of innumerable torches beneath, the calm sweet ray of the undying stars above, the tears from bright eyes, the moans pressed out of breaking hearts, the hopes and fears, and earthquake agitation, all caused by one small, pale-faced enthusiast, who seemed to wield the power of a celestial apostolate, fresh emanating out of the burning bosom of the great silent night-heavens—all combined to form a *tableau* as unique as it was terribly interesting!

But even there the orator displayed, in the after exercises of the altar, that peculiar *proclivity* which has since rendered him so notorious. His sole attentions were paid, during the entire night, to a beautiful lady of fashion, the elegant and accomplished Miss H. of Nashville. In fact, his assiduity became so marked as to attract general observation, causing some scandal, and calling for a mild reproof from the ascetic presiding elder, Rev. Mr. Gwynn.

The excitements of that remarkable occasion, added hundreds to the church in as many days. On the adjournment of the meeting, Maffit received an invitation, accompanied by a handsome *donneur* in ready cash, to visit the capital of the State. Here the scenes of the camp-ground were acted over again, though in a milder form, so as to accord with the fastidious tastes of city life. And here was laid the firm basis of the orator's immense popularity in the West. The Nashville papers teemed with glowing eulogies of an eloquence that possessed the power of taking all hearts by storm. These highly colored panegyrics were copied in most of the public prints in half a dozen States, in connection with anecdotes, real and fictitious, which served everywhere to inflame the desire to see and hear this "second

Whitefield," as his admirer's saw fit to denominate him. The result was a strong competition in the principal cities beyond the Alleghenies, as to the ones which should first be honored with the great preacher's matchless exhibitions. It resembled the anxiety shown by the managers of rival theatres, to procure the services of some distinguished tragedian—a Forrest or Macready. And accordingly every invitation was accompanied by the offer of liberal compensation—Maffit, on his part, nothing loath either to display his genius or reap the golden harvest of its reward, responded to each call in succession, as rapidly as possible, and his efforts were everywhere crowned with the splendid success attending them at Nashville. In any given town, the presence of Maffit and the consequent revival, seemed as inseparable as the flash and the roar in a thunder storm. Nor was the more public remuneration, stipulated before his arrival, the only gain that found its way into his pocket. Private donations, to an unknown but large amount, were contributed, and as often by the wicked, whom his siren voice had bewitched, as by the righteous of his own flock and fold. Anonymous correspondents sent him notes, backed in a delicate hand-writing, and steaming with sweet perfumes, inclosing ten dollar bills, fifties, and even hundreds. His wardrobe grew ponderous with costly presents. Thus we discover, at a glance, by what means he acquired his wealth, and was yet enabled to live in a style of so much splendor.

It was this wide-spread popularity over all the States of the Mississippi Valley, which produced two results, that otherwise he never could have hoped to attain: 1. His appointment to the professorial chair of Belles Lettres, in a Western college of the highest character; and 2. His election as chaplain to Congress.

The professorship proved a failure; for the learning of Maffit possessed neither the solidity nor variety necessary to success in such an undertaking.

The chaplaincy requires a more extensive statement. It was due almost exclusively to the votes of the Southern and Western members, who united to support his nomination, *en masse*, with the utmost enthusiasm.

The oratorical achievements of Maffit, at the Federal City, failed, somewhat in their customary brilliancy. The eclat of his performances resembled the painted pageant of a rainbow, gaudy but evanescent. At first his eloquence formed the topic of general converse, in nearly all society. The papers published glittering fragments from his sermons, and the whole of his morning prayers delivered in the house—and which all must admit were admirable specimens of devotional composition—brief, without a precedent, terse, fervent, with a sonorous rhythm, like the musical beats of a poetic heart. His public lectures, however, did not long serve to augment his renown. His friends, those whose influence had contributed to elect him, soon became disgusted and absented themselves altogether; and the effulgence of his fame suffered, for a time, most disastrous eclipse.

To comprehend truly the reasons of this sudden draw-back, on a popularity previously so boundless, a short view of the state of society in Washington, especially during the Sessions of Congress, becomes essential.

It is well known that at such times the city is crowded to overflowing, by *adventurers*, (shall we call them?) both male and female, of the most distinguished in the nation, for wealth, renown, accomplishments, and beauty. There we find not office-seekers alone, but fortune-seekers, husband-seekers, wife-seekers—in fine, *seekers* of every thing that may be bought with gold, or won by trickery, false pretences, and cunning manoeuvres. The seat of Government is then a great social gambling-house, with unnumbered tables of hazard, of which the *political* faro-banks of party make only a part. All this is a matter of public notoriety, with which all intelligent persons may now be said to be familiar. But there are certain private transactions involving practices infinitely more odious, of which even well-informed readers are totally ignorant. If parents knew all, they would surely pause to reflect, before taking a step so perilous as to dispatch their blooming daughters to spend a winter in Washington.

Let us lift the screen from these mysteries of gilded infamy, and let in the scorching fires of popular scorn and indignation. It must be obvious without any experience of facts on such a subject, that a member of Congress must, from the very nature of his position and influence, be a dangerous gallant for a giddy-headed thoughtless girl, devoted to show, dress, and trivial amusements. And yet a man, with M. C. affixed to his name, finds no difficulty in procuring an introduction to

the most *exclusive votaress* of fashion. Custom has sanctioned the practice; and any one acquainted with the circle of fetes, balls, and other brilliant assemblies, that tread on each others heels so rapidly during the Session, knows that it is common for each representative and senator, (with but few exceptions,) to attend some one elegant beauty, as her special and recognized beau, (*platonic* of course) on all occasions, without exciting surprise much less animadversion! What matters it that at home he is regarded as a notorious rake, at the mere touch of whose hand a modest woman would blush with shame? That home is, perhaps, five hundred miles distant; and *here he* associates with the *greatest*, and can introduce his *favorite* to the *richest* in the Nation. What matters it that he is already a married man, and the father, it may be, of daughters as old as the *belle* who hangs on his arm, or nightly smiles in his wanton eyes, treading the voluptuous mazes of the waltz or *polka*? These are far away; and *here he* has a voice in the dispensation of place and power, and can not only provide the *fair creature* who admires him, with a husband, some banger-on *protege*; but he can also, perchance, furnish, by his recommendation, that husband himself with a snug office, a consulate *charge*, or secretaryship of legation! Or *he* can do something of the kind for her cousin, father, or brother. And thus is a Member of Congress armed with every weapon dangerous to the virtue of an inexperienced girl.

Suppose with all these advantages he is successful; and she falls a prey to his arts and importunity, it is exceedingly important to both, that the matter be not made public; and what mode of concealment can be devised so effectual for that purpose as to marry *her* off, as soon as possible, to some one of his numerous *proteges*, or of those expectants of office, to whom his advice is a command!

The author knows one young man who visited the Federal City two winters ago, and there were several attempts made by Members to induce him to marry their secret mistresses. One of these was by a representative from Texas!——. And another was by a Congressman of *puritanic piety*, from "Gotham" itself! Their base endeavors were defeated by the information of a casual acquaintance, who, residing at Washington, and having obtained long before a peep behind the screen, saw and pried the *verdant* youth's dilemma, and kindly volunteered to open his eyes as to the real state of the facts.

It is easier to imagine, than to describe the condition of social and domestic morality, where such things are of annual occurrence. Gallantry is esteemed as the chief accomplishment of a gentleman, and giddy flirtation, as the necessary characteristic of every lady. We do not mean to insinuate that the moral disease is universal, or that many bright examples of purity in life and manners, are not to be found in *this* atmosphere tainted with general infection. We only state the causes which operate to produce a wide-extended, and deep-rooted depravity, and detail sufficient facts, to prove that such a consequence results from the given causes. It is impossible to speak plainer without specifying names, which is the business of the *slanderer*, as wicked as it is worthless of any good effects.

Maffit, from the commencement, appears to have perceived instinctively this condition of Federal-City Morality, and the prevalence of fashionable sins. The rock on which he seems to have split, was the attempt to accommodate his private conduct, and public ministrations to the sinister circumstances of his new position.

He outdid the *exquisites* themselves in the magnificence of his dress, and over-polished courtesies of his demeanor. His attention to the *ladies* was unremitting, and rumor, as a thing of course, whispered, that the orator allowed his gallant propensities to transcend the bounds prescribed, to clerical moderation!

In the pulpit, he also omitted the *revivalist* portions of his sermons, as not suitable to the refined tastes of his present auditories.

Now, it is evident, that the foregoing was just the course he should not have pursued to please the prejudices of his friends, the Southern and Western members, whose particular delight is in spontaneous gushes of eloquence; who look with scorn and detestation on written prelections; and hold the little *minutiae* of polite etiquette in the most sovereign contempt. There is nothing in the world, a genuine backwoodsman so unutterably abominates as the arts of a dancing-master, unless, indeed, it be theatrical display! And, however much addicted they may be themselves to the *minor peccadilloes*, prohibited by a stringent code of ethics,

they are at the same time, extremely rigid in demanding the utmost sanctity in their clergy.

For the above reasons, Maffit's chaplaincy turned out a splendid failure. The tact, however, is not singular, since a like fate has attended the efforts of all other celebrated orators who have occupied the same post. It was certainly not owing to any defect in the genius of the enthusiastic speaker; for he has succeeded to the utmost of his ambition, with hearers equally competent both to admire, and to criticise; and shortly afterwards made a flying visit to the Crescent City, which his powerful elocution excited, like a sudden shock of electricity.

### CHAPTER III.

#### MAFFIT'S SECOND MARRIAGE—ATTACKS IN THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE AND POLICE GAZETTE—DEFENCE IN THE SUNDAY MORNING NEWS—TRUE STATE OF THE CASE.

We have now arrived at the darkest page in the eventful history of Maffit—a page nearly illegible, covered as it is with a thick cloud of mystery; and if certain authorities are to be credited, stained with unexampled sensuality, and the blood of a virtual and most atrocious murder! We allude to the story of his last miserable marriage, and the truly horrible consequences resulting from the affair—acts of a terrible tragedy, which have excited a thrill of interest, and elicited a call for inquiry in the great popular heart, heaving with deep emotions and painful anxiety, from one end of the continent to the other.

Never before, perhaps, in the history of the world, did any private fact arouse such intense public curiosity. It might be said, without hyperbole, that the eyes of a whole Nation, from Maine to Texas, from all the regions within hearing of the Atlantic's solemn roar to the feet of the Rocky Mountains, are awake, or will soon be awake, and fixed with a glance of the keenest scrutiny, witnessing the developments, and watching for the *dénouement* of the extraordinary plot, now in a state of progress and bitter, fierce discussion among the managers and actors of the royal theatre of newspapers.

And truly, if ever in any case, in *this*, the people of the whole country have amplest reasons for their curiosity, and the clearest right to demand that it be satisfied by the freest and fullest exposition of all facts, in any way connected with the subject of so much absorbing interest. For the chief individual is one whose name is a familiar word, alike on the banks of the Hudson and Missouri; on the White Hills of New Hampshire, where the wild wind howls amidst snow-drifts half the year, and in the hot rice-fields of Carolina and Florida, where a flake of frost never falls—because he is one who has travelled here, there, everywhere over the broad bosom of this magnificent land; not as a pedlar in politics, a huckster of the light wares of party; not as a conquering hero, with the sword for a sickle reaping bloody laurels, but as a Christian Minister, armed only with a bible and hymn-book, and professing to bear a commission of apostolate from Heaven—as a sectarian orator of matchless power, whose presence became synonymous with the term "Revival"—one, the music of whose siren tongue distilled pathos soft as the dropping of Hermon's dew on the heavenly hills, and brewed tears as plenteous as the rains of cloud-collecting summer—one whose prayers and gorgeous sermons have been copied from sheet to sheet, fluttering over the area of thirty vast States, until eulogy became exhausted, and criticism was struck dumb with wonder—whose clerical labors have gathered into the fold more wandering sheep than have ever come at the call of any other pastor in the precincts of a civilized community—and finally, one whose character has been assailed by the shafts of all sorts of foes, during the long quarter of a century, and still continued in public estimation without an appreciable tarnish.

It was reasonable to assume, that all the sayings and doings of one so distin-

guished, so covered with far-flashing glory, whether real or fictitious, would excite the casual attention, if nothing more, of the millionaire masses to whom his fame had become a thing of experience as well as history. The assumption of the fact of such attention, deepening into anxious inquiry, would be still stronger on the supposition, that these sayings or doings should be of a remarkable nature, either in matter or form. And such has been the fact.

The last year he married, and nearly every paper in the Nation copied the notice of the nuptial ceremony. About the same time his first wife died, and the obituary circulated to the ends of the country.

After a few short months he separated from his second and beautiful bride; and ere the next new moon, the fact was known to the herdsmen of Iowa, and the hunters of Texas.

And then, treading on the heels of the mournful intelligence, there came certain accusations, in the form of dim mysterious hints, and emanating from organs of the first respectability; and these, too, went the grand rounds, inflaming public curiosity in a remarkable degree. They were followed by direct charges, alleging against the revivalist orator, crimes of the most abominable atrocity, and which, if true, degrade him below the level of brutes, sink him beneath the contempt of demons, and make even humanity blush, that such a monster of moral depravity is permitted to wear its image, to pollute the air he breathes, and shame the very sun that shines on a face so wonderfully wicked!

It can be no marvel, that under circumstances of a character so *unique*, the people should earnestly desire to be informed as to the true state of facts. The topic has been *thrust*, as it were, like a rude blow in their faces, and consequently they have now a right to be thoroughly satisfied.

In truth, the popular interest is involved at a far greater depth than superficial observers might conceive. The mere surface of the isolated case is a matter of minor importance; in the view of profounder questions, one might almost say a matter of no importance at all. Whether John Newland Maffit be pure as an angel, or polluted as a fiend, is a problem by itself, scarcely worth the trouble of solution. Nay, if he were hung up by the neck like a common felon to-morrow, the mass of American readers could be affected by it in no other way than as a bit of thrilling news. The same remark may be made as to the sad fate of the unfortunate girl, whom chance, in one of its wildest freaks, threw in his way.

Frances Smith, perhaps, perished the victim of blighted hopes and a broken heart. Her case was by no means singular. Thousands thus die annually of the same torturing disease; or more wretched still, linger on in a long life of agony, with the scorpion of *disappointed love*, nestling among fallen flowers and withered leaves, in the cold, desolate, worse than widowed heart. Yet who cares for these, unless the history of their sorrows be done up as a matter of fiction, and dealt out to the lips of soft sentimentalism by the tempting hand of genius?

But as we have said, the present instance offers to the consideration of the people, a problem of far deeper character than any to be found in the actual interest of the narrative itself—a problem which may be stated concisely, in the following form:—Can it be possible that the greatest profligate, *roue*, drunkard, and villain that the sun of Heaven ever saw—the monster-wolf of the universe—could so effectually wrap up and conceal his innate, hideous deformities in sheep's or in shepherd's clothing; as to deceive a dozen millions of people during twenty-five years of this enlightened nineteenth century; and that all this enormous hypocrisy succeeded, while he stood in a hundred, a thousand pulpits, rising at different points on the great continent's map in full view, a mark for the broad gaze of a nation of eyes, some fiercely hostile, many coldly critical towards the glory and glitter of his fame; and that uncounted cohorts of hardened sinners should profess conversion under the influence of his preaching, which carried electric excitement wherever the extraordinary wretch rambled, in the north, south, east, and west; and that he should, until now, when his head has grown grey, and his renown established, escape detection and censure from the watchful *police* of the ministry of that strait sect to whom he belonged—a hierarchy as well organized as the Jesuits in their palmiest days. Is such a moral phenomenon possible?

This is the true problem, and the strongest of evidence has been produced, indicating an affirmative solution. And if such be the case, then doth it behove every



person capable of reflection, to pause and consider, and ever afterwards hesitate long and examine fully, before pledging confidence to pretensions of exalted piety, or yielding up the citadel of the soul to eloquence the most evangelic. If such a devil can so transform himself into an angel of light, as to become the Arch-Hierophant of "Revivals," can be the instrument of salvation to thousands, the suggestion is inevitable, as to what credence can be given to the spirituality of such *excitements*! What sort of a flame is that which can be kindled by the hand of the chief of prodigals, hot reeking from the sensual hells of great cities? Can such a one be supposed to bring "airs from Heaven," or burning blasts from the furnace of Hades?

These are necessary questions, which the inference of a spontaneous logic must predicate on the given allegations, supposing them to be proven. But the terrible tale has two sides, according as it is told by enemies or friends. The former represent the hero of the story as less than a man, and more than a fiend—the bodily incarnation of every crime in the appalling catalogue of unpardonable sins. The latter cry out "*Audi alteram partem*," and proceed to show that he is the victim of a slanderous conspiracy; spotless of guilt as a seraph. If the former are to be credited, the Rev J. N. Maffit richly deserves a coat of feathers and tar—the feathers to be quills of "the fretted porcupine," piercing into the core of his guilty heart; and the tar to be set on fire, and consume him from the earth to the meanest dust of which the bare touch of his beastly foot is contamination, not all the rains of Heaven can ever wash away! But if we can believe the defenders of the magician of the eloquent tongue, then indeed is he the purest and the most persecuted of men—the martyr of murderous *libels*!—libels as much more atrocious than murder, as much more infamous than purple-spotted piracy, as those offences are worse than the lightest peccadillo! And on such a supposition, Maffit's calumniators ought to share a more dreadful fate than that which we have just sketched for him, as the punishment of his hypothetical guilt. They should die the most loathsome of all shocking deaths—be *crucified* on the points of their own poisoned pens! It is exceedingly difficult to presume, however, we may remark *en passant*, that editors of their grade, such as the Christian Advocate and National Police Gazette, would perpetrate such foul slander, and without forcible proof, brave those heavy prosecutions which we are assured legal gentlemen of the highest standing will shortly prepare against them!

Every body must feel satisfied of one thing at least, that it is neither from the foes nor friends of the "Revivalist," that a perfectly accurate narrative of the *past* can be expected. They *could* not give it, if they *would*; and for the simple and obvious reason, that from the first moment, when they touched pen to paper in assault or defence, they ceased to be *judges*, and became *advocates* with authorial reputations, and the hopes of regular pecuniary profit, all pledged to the affirmative, or negative assumed on the occasion. It may be, and doubtless is true, that under such circumstances, honest witnesses, notwithstanding their own special interest connected with the case, can relate accurately the facts which they have examined. But that is not the difficulty. They may tell with the strictness of unimpeachable veracity, what they really see and know; but the prejudice unalterably attached to their position, must prevent them from *seeing* clearly, or *knowing* thoroughly. Their vision is *colored* by the medium of their own passions, of love, and hate. It must be so in the very nature of things, provided they be honest men. It is true in the optics of the soul, as well as in those of sight,—that the accuracy of a perspective in any given case, depends more on the point of observation from which we take our view, than even on the actual outlines of the object, at which we gaze. Thus the water-drops suspended in the atmosphere, which from one peak of the mountain, show but as a black mass of stormy vapor, from the altitude of a taller summit, stream out into the sun-checked rainbow, the arch of whose gleaming wings, spans the earth, and sweeps the farthest sky. Life, Religion, Art, Science, and all questions of each wear a different aspect, accordingly, as we contemplate them in different moods of mind,—in joy, or sorrow; in gladness, or gloom; and more especially with warm-hearted love, or cold-blooded aversion.

We are prepared, therefore, candidly and cheerfully, to admit that both the *advocates for*, and *against* John Newland Maffit, are actuated by honest and patriotic

motives; but we maintain, nevertheless, that an accurate account of the particular matter in controversy, cannot rationally be hoped from either. Indeed, both are incompetent to judge, for another reason besides the strong one, which we have just stated,—their utter ignorance of the past history, and natural disposition of the man, whose deeds, in a single instance only, they profess to discuss.

The present writer proposes to pursue a different method,—to treat the subject not as an attorney, but as a historian. To detail the genuine facts, and then explain them philosophically, according to a key furnished by a searching analysis of the character, and passional organization of Maffit.

In following out this plan, we will first give the two versions of that tragical story of "the second marriage;" the one by his enemies, the other by his friends; and then present the whole affair, as it really is, and was, stripped of all the adventitious drapery, which partiality and prejudice, have alike thrown around it.

We epitomize the charges against "the great Revivalist," from the Christian Advocate and Journal, and the National Police Gazette. The reader will carefully bear in mind, that we give this only as an abridgement, without vouching for its truth, and with the sole view to its use afterwards, for the purposes of an explanation.

For some time before his second marriage, J. N. Maffit had preached with distinguished success in the city of New York. But, being charged with profanity and profligacy, to avoid expulsion he changed the field of his labors. He was admitted to a church in Brooklyn, by the Rev. J. C. Green, its proprietor and pastor.

In this new theatre, his brilliant, and enthusiastic eloquence soon succeeded in producing (with him,) the usual intense excitement. His auditories were crowded as well by the *elite* of wealth and fashion, as by the more numerous throng, from the middle and lower classes of society.

It chanced one evening, during the progress of "the great Revival," that a bevy of young, giddy girls, led by curiosity, entered the Centenary church, then rendered the point of a general attraction; by the alluring poetic appeals of Maffit, and the wondrous awakening resultant therefrom. Among these was one of a singularly romantic disposition, but pure, innocent, credulous, and beautiful as the angel of youth's bright dreams. Frances Smith, or Fanny Pierce, as she was called by her mates, from the name of her step-father, Judge Pierce, of Brooklyn, with whom, and her mother, she resided, was truly a miracle of goodness and grace, as scrupulous in her morals, as lovely in her person. She was exactly the being to catch the fancy of Maffit, who, while comforting the mourners in the aisle, peeped under her bonnet, and was deeply smitten with the vision of enchanting beauty that met his fascinated gaze. That look sealed her fate. It was the Basilisk glance of a destiny, big with disaster and death. For then and there, in the sacred precincts of the altar, while the moans of the penitents, and shouts of the neophytes resounded in his ears, the gray-haired minister in the base sensuality of his soul, devoted that delicate flower, in all the charms of its fresh, dewy youth, to seduction and ruin!

From the first sight, the Orator intended to draw his victim into the whirlpool of religious excitement, and thus prepare the way for the execution of his deadly purpose. His marked, and special notice did not fail to arouse a deep interest in her mind,—not one of spiritual fervor, but a sensation of vanity, in her weak, woman's inexperienced heart, at the idea of eliciting the prominent attention of a man so famous for genius and influence! Thus her vanity twined the thread by which she was dragged on to destruction!

Maffit managed to procure an introduction to her family, and soon became her particular gallant to all places of devotion.

His first attempt was one of immediate seduction. Defeated in this by her modesty, he next essayed to bewitch and bewilder her imagination, by Bacchanalian orgies, hoping that in a state of intoxication, at least, she would fall an easy prey to his unlawful passion. With that intent, he was assisted by the Rev. J. C. Green, who led the unsophisticated girl through a basement-window of the Centenary church, to several nightly revels. But the stimulating effects of wine, were insufficient to overcome her invincible virtue; and as a final resource, the infatuated lover was driven to a reluctant offer of marriage. But even this sacrifice, for a

while, did not avail him, until he tendered a pecuniary premium for the possession of the object of his passionate desire. His *brother Green*, was the marriage-broker who completed the definitive contract, aided by the ingenuity of a circle of female parasites, who surrounded the maiden, loading Maffit with exaggerated eulogies, and harping perpetually on the theme of his boundless wealth, and splendid position in society. The huckstering agent on the part of his amatory friend, presented her with costly love-offerings, in the shape of glittering jewels, and a rich rose-wood piano; and finally stood security to an ante-nuptial bond, settling on Miss Smith, the round sum of \$7000. Her weak soul yielded to so many flattering inducements. Bewildered, blinded by the dazzle of her own imagination, she tottered, and fell headlong into the dark gulf of legal prostitution, so artfully dug beneath her feet. She became the bride of a man, old enough to be her father!

Such was the first scene in the Tragedy!

In ten days after the nuptials, the appetite of the profligate being palled, he left for Pittsburg, having first consigned his blooming bride, to the special guardianship of "*brother Green*," charging her to be guided by his direction in all things.

The young wife had, however, some serious misgivings, as to this conjugal mandate; for it seems that "*brother Green*" had contracted the annoying habit of chasing her about to steal sly kisses! She had informed her husband of this, but he treated the matter as a joke.

Some few days after Maffit's departure, Elder Green took his friend's consort to the American Museum in company with his own daughter. Nothing worth relation at that time transpired. Shortly afterwards he went with her alone, and during the visit made an infamous proposal, which filled her pure heart with unutterable loathing. He urged "that himself was a minister of Jesus, and could neither commit, nor impart sin! and that it was her husband's pleasure, to allow such a partnership in his matrimonial rights!"

On her return, the daughter poured the terrible tale into her horrified mother's ear.

Soon afterwards, Maffit's letters, previously breathing ineffable, undying fondness, changed to a laconic coldness, mixed with mysterious innuendoes, as though he had experienced, at her hands, some outrageous wrong. It was about this time that he received an account of the decease of his first wife in Texas.

Hurrying back to Brooklyn, he met his consort with a manner of freezing indifference, and ere three days elapsed, broke forth into a torrent of profane curses, accusing her of incontinence, and defaming her with the vilest epithets of hatred and rage!

When rebuked for his cruel conduct, he denied the accusation; but being at length caught in the act by Judge Pierce, fell cowering upon his knees, and endeavored to palliate his crime by entering the plea of drunkenness!

Maffit was now informed of "*brother Green's*" disgraceful proposition to his wife, during his absence. He pretended infinite anger, assumed the airs of a tragedian—now raving furious, threatening vengeance against his accomplice, and then praying Heaven to lend him patience, and to keep him from perpetrating murder. These bursts of fictitious wrath always occurred when he was drunk! When returning sobriety would bring again the cool exercise of reason, he manifested a lamb-like forbearance, excusing himself to Judge Pierce, for not chastising the insulter of his wife, on the ground that Green was a material witness for him in a heavy suit of slander.

During all this time, Maffit and Green were holding private consultations daily, the object of which was the commission of farther and greater enormities.

It seems that "*brother Green*," disappointed in his sensual hopes, as to his share in the victim's beauty, sought to be relieved from paying his part of the price; in other words, to have his name cancelled on the ante-nuptial bond. But the most terrifying menaces failed to induce Mrs. Maffit to yield her consent.

Only one method, therefore, remained to vitiate the onerous contract—to blast the reputation of the wife, and allege her conjugal infidelity as a plea, in justification of its non-fulfilment. And such a course was resolved on accordingly.

For this purpose a meeting of conspiracy was held at the house of a merchant in Brooklyn, who was also a minister. There was present also, besides Maffit and "*brother Green*," another preacher of Long Island. Then and there was excogitated a plan to ruin that innocent wife's character, with the avowed view of defeating the obligation of which we have previously spoken. And immediately commenced the propagation of those slanders which covered with so dark a cloud that name, over whose stainless surface before, a single shadow had never passed.

After Maffit's return home from Pittsburg, at the solicitation of his wife, they made a summer visit to Islip, L. I. Maffit took with him a huge bottle of brandy, the last of three demijohns he had recently emptied into a thirsty throat, capable of swallowing an indefinite number more. They stopped at a hotel in Islip, and while there, he alternately chided her with the bitterest abuse; and brought her to the bar, making her charms the subject of coarse remark among the drunken loafers of the place.

He returned to Brooklyn alone, and being interrogated as to the cause, alleged lascivious misconduct on the part of his wife.

In the meanwhile, the four clerical conspirators were employed in their separate tasks. Maffit and Green magnifying on all occasions the indiscretions of the lady; another reverend gentleman told the story of an invented abortion at a dinner-table in Tarrytown; while the fourth traitor, touched with late scruples of conscience, revealed the whole infamous plot to Mrs. Maffit's mother.

Such is a brief epitome of the National Police Gazette, *versus* John Newland Maffit, *minus* the terms of terrible denunciation, with which the indignant editor literally sears and scorches his own heaving page, where, if the thoughts do not "breathe," still there can be no question that the words "burn." There cannot be even the possibility of a doubt, that so respectable a journal relies on strong evidence to support such charges, uttered, too, in the face of an absolute certainty of prosecution for libel, civil as well as criminal. In itself, the paper is high authority, a fact sufficiently testified by its immense, and still increasing circulation even now running up by thousands of subscribers in a single revolution of the moon.

## CONTRA.

Let us turn the tables, and hear the other side. The counsel for the *social* and *moral* state has closed. The *accused* may open his defence.

We abridge this defence from the Sunday Morning News.

The recent slanderous attacks on the character of Maffit were first commenced in the Christian Advocate, and the fact itself is very significant, and may furnish a key to the motives and object of such merciless persecution and unmitigated calumny. For at the time the charges were made in that journal, a heavy suit for libel was pending against its editors on the part of Maffit; and hence it is easy to account for their anxiety to blacken his reputation, and thus poison public opinion, with a view to the ultimate procurement of a partial verdict in their favor. The Police Gazette took up the matter for a different purpose. The conductors of the sheet in question, devoted especially as it is, to the serving up of horrible dishes of murder, and other tit-bits of atrocious crime, saw at a glance, that by a terrible attack on an individual so celebrated, their readers would be immensely increased; and accordingly the event has fully justified their editorial sagacity; for since the publication of their first malignant article, their circulation has run up by several thousands of subscribers. The proprietors of newspapers need not be blamed for such conduct—the fault rather lies in the public, to whose tastes they are compelled to cater; and the experience of all publishers in their line proves, "that no article in the trade finds half such ready sale as malicious libels aimed at distinguished men!" The circumstantial report of a fiendish murder does very well in its place; but the too frequent repetition palls on the voracious appetite of the most thorough literary cannibals. A case of seduction is still better, delicious as nectar, stimulating as alcohol. It will sell. In the absence of this, a coarse rape may answer one bout. There is no danger of its hanging on the hands of light dealers. But better than these, O! far, infinitely better than all morsels of malice that ever were concocted, or even conceived, is a real *bona fide* libel against some great name, beaming with a world-wide renown. It is a godsend, a gold mine, a fortune, in fee-simple absolute, to the pen that indites it, and the type that impresses it on the virgin paper! It is to be hoped, therefore, that nobody will blame those editorial ministers, who watch to keep the everlasting fire burning in the temple of scandal. They are consecrated to the office by popular taste. They are paid for it. It is their professional business. Their bread is baked in the furnace of defamation. Their butter is churned in the writhing valves of broken and persecuted hearts! But these human hyenas, who prey alike on the hopes of the living and memories of the dead, gloating ever with strong stomachs, like obscene ravens over the rank putrescence of mortal infirmity, may fairly claim a still more conclusive apology in their favor. They are not the fabricators of the slanders in which they traffic. They do but peddle out the wares supplied by others.

For instance, no one can suppose that the editor of the Police Gazette has detailed one line in his fierce charges against Maffit, which he is not perfectly prepared to substantiate. He tells only what was first told to him by the enemies of the celebrated orator. He knows

not, and cares not whether the tale be true or false. The grand problem with him at the outset was, and still is, "will the matter pay?" Will it make the Gazette run up? Will it realize the hard cash? Hence the authority of that paper is not evidence in the case at all. It is mere hear-say, and as such, inadmissible in the court of conscience, as it would be at the bar of any unprejudiced tribunal. To arrive at the real witness we must travel farther, though at the peril of faring worse. It is fortunate, however, that we shall experience very little trouble in reaching the source of the malignant slander. We have only to take a single step, and we can see plainly enough whose hand it was that loaded and primed this great gun for the destruction of an innocent man. The facts mostly said to have transpired, were of a nature that they could have come only from the surviving friends, or more properly, family of the late Mrs. Maffit. In other words, Judge Pierce, the step-father, is the real witness in the affair, and the editor of the Police Gazette performs only the part of mouth-piece. He is but a speaking trumpet, filled with the libelous breath of the "Honorable" Judge.

Under these circumstances, it becomes exceedingly important, as a preliminary question, to inquire into the motives and feelings of Mr. Pierce, who appears on the stand in the double character of prosecutor and witness.

A lawyer might enter an objection to his competency, on the ground of *interest*, since whatever cunning and subterfuge may be used to disguise the fact, nobody can have the hardihood to deny that "the Brooklyn Judge" is the genuine party that has preferred the charges. But waiving the plea of incompetency, it is for the public to say what degree of credibility can be accorded to testimony, flowing from a fountain so very suspicious—to say whether a heart full of malice will not dash its dark waters on the lip.

—It is a well known fact, established by (alas! too much,) mournful experience, that no controversies engender emotions of such intense bitterness, as those resulting from matrimonial dissensions; emotions that commonly extend to the whole circle of relatives, and friends, drawing them all into the vortex of inextinguishable hatred. And who, it may be asked, possessed of one spark of humanity, or sentiment of justice, would choose, under such circumstances, to condemn one of the parties on the statement of the other, excited as the both are, and, in the nature of things, must be, by feelings, that would preclude them from telling the whole truth, even if they were so disposed?

But we are not driven to mere abstract inference, *a priori*, in order to shake the credibility of that sole witness in the case, "the Honorable Mr. Pierce." We have the evidence of the Judge's deadly hatred, and venetful purpose, towards his former son-in-law, furnished by the following letter, in which all the most abusive words in the language are heaped together, in a way that proves the painful state of passion, which must have prompted such an effusion.

It must be borne in mind by the reader, that his vindictive epistle was penned under peculiar circumstances. Maffit and his wife had been some time separate. He was preaching in New Orleans. She was lying at the point of death, in Brooklyn. And at this crisis, Judge Pierce fearing to lose the whole of the \$7000 ante-nuptial bond, which would be rendered null by his daughter's death, wrote to a friend in "the Crescent City," requesting him to arrange a compromise, and if possible, procure half the round sum in dispute. This proceeding, on the part of "his Honor," to say the least of it, seems tainted with a strong odor of fraud. Maffit could know nothing of the lady's dying condition. The Judge knew all about it; and his attempt, at such a moment, to lay his hands on \$3,500, and without any equivalent, or the shadow of a *quid pro quo*, extract it from the pocket of one, he so unspeakably hated, evinced a want of honor, as well as integrity, rarely to be found in the history of human depravity. But be this as it may, the document unquestionably establishes his boundless malice towards Maffit; and subtracts the last grain of weight, that otherwise might attach to his testimony.

But here is the letter. Let it speak for itself.

BROOKLYN, May 8th, 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND—

I noticed a few days ago, in a newspaper, that a large public meeting was held in New Orleans, to congratulate France on the establishment of a republican government, and among the speakers was the Rev. John N. Maffit. When I saw you, my friend, I did not as fully know Maffit as I do now. He is one of the most infamous scoundrels that ever lived. Maffit and John C. Green have destroyed the peace of my family. Maffit is also one of the most infamous liars that I ever was acquainted with; and that is not all, he is an habitual drunkard—for nearly six months he boarded with me, and I can truly say, that not a day passed but what he was more or less under the influence of liquor, and often he was so drunk as to be under the necessity of going to bed. Maffit had not been married but a few weeks before he commenced cruelly treating and abusing his wife, a young girl of sixteen years, whom he had ruined. Last September Maffit procured a boarding-place for his wife in New York, and in October he left her for the west, giving his wife \$3. He was absent until about the 25th of

December. While he was absent his wife wrote to him twice or three times for money, as she was entirely destitute of winter clothing, and not having shoes to her feet, and not even a sixpence to pay her stage fare or ferrriage to enable her to visit her mother—at the same time, Maffit told his friends not to let her have one cent of money. She was destitute of every thing but her board. I was under the necessity of advancing her money for her immediate wants. I also advised Mrs. Maffit, as her husband had cruelly treated and abused her, his wife, to leave him and come home, and live with her father and mother, as she did before Green and Maffit ruined her. At the time she left him, Maffit got down on his knees, and begged her not to leave him, as it would ruin him forever. She replied that he had already ruined her, and leave him she would.

Previous to their marriage, Maffit entered into an ante-nuptial agreement, securing to his wife the interest of \$7000, to be put into the hands of a trustee; which money was to be invested for her especial benefit; and, as I stated before, Maffit having so cruelly treated his wife, and she having found him to be a common drunkard, her affections were altogether wained from him, and I believe she perfectly hates him. Then this *infamous, lying, drunken rillain* put a story in circulation, that his wife was not virtuous when he married her, and that she was in the family way before he married her; this was done to destroy the ante-nuptial agreement. Whilst Maffit was last in New York I tried to get an interview with him, but could not, and in a few days after his wife left him. He also left for New Orleans. He did not even dare to come to Brooklyn. If he had come, I believe my friends would have torn him to pieces.

I have given you only a short account of this rascal's conduct. Since he has been in the city of New Orleans, he has told that his wife was a bad woman, and had left her mother. This was read to me by a gentleman who had received a letter from a friend in your city. Mrs. Maffit has been living with me ever since she left him, and is now very sick with the typhus fever; and I have no doubt but trouble of mind has brought on her sickness. In regard to the virtuous character of my step-daughter, from a child up to the present time, it can be proved to be pure, by the most respectable testimony.

Mr. Soule, U. S. elect, was one of the speakers with Maffit at the meeting I have before spoken of. If you have any acquaintance with him, warn him against Maffit. Tell him that all the charges made against Maffit are true, and can be proved by testimony of the first respectability—such men as Lieutenant Brownell of the U. S. Navy, Dr. Van Zandt, and others; and I can be sustained by such men as ex-Gov. Bouck, General Dix, and Dickinson of the U. S. senate.

I wish you would see Mr. Maffit, and say to him that, as he and his wife boarded with me for nearly six months, and is indebted to me over \$200, and if he will send me a draft for \$150, I will give him a receipt in full. He is also owing some small bills for postage, besides. If he complies with this request, it will save me the trouble of commencing a lawsuit. I wish you would further say to him that, if he will give his wife \$3,500, this being one-half of the \$7,000 which he gave her the interest of in the ante-nuptial agreement, then his responsibility will come to an end.

We have nothing new here. I believe your friends and wife's friends are well, at this time. I should be happy to receive an answer from this, at your earliest convenience.

I am yours, with much esteem,

JOHN PIERCE.

To———Esq.,  
New Orleans, La.

We ask all candid readers, on the perusal of the foregoing letter, to say what degree of credit, can any man in his sober senses give to the unsupported assertions of one actuated by so much aversion, and truculent hostility, as the writer himself was not ashamed to allow? And thus we see, at the commencement of the investigation, that the defence occupies a position of strong vantage-ground, by the antecedent improbability, that charges coming from so exceedingly dubious a source, should be true. And accordingly, when we take up and examine the allegations in their order, all and singular, they turn out to be utterly false.

1. Maffit is accused of employing various, as well as vile stratagems, to win the heart and enjoy the person of Frances, the young girl, who afterwards became his wife. On the contrary, it was she, who made the first advances; professed to love him *distractedly*, before he had ever made her acquaintance; and persisted in the avowal, after the earnest remonstrance of his friends, to dissuade her from pursuing a passion so imprudent. He did not buy her regard with costly presents. He presented the gold watch, not till their troth had been plighted; and the famous "rosewood piano," not till they had been married two months! It is *infamously* false, that she was taken through a basement window to hold nightly revels with her lover, and indulge in drunken orgies!

2. He is accused of treating her with miserly meanness, in pecuniary matters. Whereas, according to his circumstances, he dealt with her most munificently. Being unpleasantly situated at her mother's, in Brooklyn, and refusing to remain longer, he suffered her to select her own board, which she did in New York, at a respectable house kept by Miss Smith, at 555

Houston street. It must be confessed, however, that the lady, owing to her peculiar fashionable *penchant* for *pants* and *powder*, turned out to be a rather expensive speculation, as the following characteristic letter, written while she was at Islip, will show.

Letter to Miss ————

Thursday Afternoon.

MY DEAR CALL:

Here I am, still at Islip, although I am quite anxious to return to the city. I suppose you are enjoying yourself very much with your cousin ————. Give my love to her. I missed you very much when you went away. I had no idea you would go as soon as you did. Now, Call, I want you to do something for me; it is this: Go to Mrs. Hayes', in Fulton street, and get me a box of Pink Meenfun, like the one you got before, it will be 1' shilling. Then go over to New York, to the corner of Chatham square and Oliver street, and get me a quarter of a pound of flake white, which will be eight-pence. You will know the store, it is a paint shop I believe. Ask for flake white; that is the name of the whiting I use, you know. I want you to buy me 3 quarters of a yard of black velvet ribbon, for bracelets. I want the velvet about so ————\* wide, and get me 4 steel buttons, about so O † big. Now, Cady, be sure and get these things for me, and wrap them up nicely in a newspaper, and send them to me Tuesday without fail. Borrow the money of father, and write me word, when you send them, how much they cost, and I will send you the money to pay him. Now, Cad, don't disappoint me, dear, but get them, and send them to me Tuesday without fail. Don't let any one see this letter, I entreat of you; you can say you have got a letter from me, but don't let Mr. Maffit know I sent for anything by you. Give my love to father, and tell him mother wants to see him very much. If you receive this letter before Mr. Maffit comes away, tell him not to forget, the guitar he promised to fetch me; but I must finish, so good bye, dear Cady.

Your aff. sister,

FRANK.

3. He is accused of shocking profanity and perpetual inebriety, and of employing "Brother Green," to seduce his own wife, in his absence! which latter fact, it is alleged Mrs. Maffit communicated to her mother. This horrible charge is sufficiently refuted by the undeniable fact—that for several months after the pretended attempt at seduction, the lady, her mother, and step-father, all three, regularly attended Mr. Green's weekly ministrations: and the mother was all the while so much attached to Maffit, that she insisted he should be invited to preach in the church, and even threatened to remove her membership, unless her wishes were complied with.

4. He is charged with grossly abusing his wife, torturing her pure ears with vile epithets, and accusing her of lascivious conduct. But this, as well as all the other counts, in the long editorial indictment, are fully and for ever answered by a perusal of the following letters: solemn admissions of the parties, which would be evidence conclusive, in the strictest court of justice. The first was written by Maffit, while his lady was at Islip, L. I., in Aug., 1847. It is beautiful as a literary effusion, a gem dropped from the coronal of a genius! rich to prodigality, beyond precedent in modern ages. It is still more valuable as an exponent and infallible index to the secret mysteries of the wondrous man's history and heart. It not only irradiates the present rendering the labyrinth of gloomy circumstances, clear as the sun, at noonday, but it points a finger of burning light far back into the depths of the unforgotten past, and calls up other agonies of an earnest, poetic spirit, ever pining for sweet celestial sympathy, yet fated still to drink only the bitter waters of disappointment and strife. It is literally the despairing love-sigh of a great affectionate nature, letting go all its idols, bidding adieu to all its hopes, yet strong still as an iron mountain, that the earthquake may dis-crown of its bouquet of flowery forests, but cannot shake from its immovable base. What a world of crucified, yet undying, and inextinguishable feeling, is concealed beneath the half translucent veil of that short, shrieking sentence: "For twelve years I had trembled at trusting my fortune again into the hands of a woman!" Twelve years of widowed, icy isolation, to such a soul; so passionate, yet pure, loving all beautiful things. But the angelic "human face divine," more than all, must have contained an eternity of torture. Truly may it be said: that genius is baptized with gold; but its gold descends in molten showers, that "burns the brain," and consume the bleeding bosom on which they fall from the fiery mint-furnace of the un-ascended stars!

But we will not farther shame so beautiful a text, by our beggarly comment. It needs no EXEGESIS to be comprehended by those who have the good fortune to possess hearts: so all others, it is, and must ever remain a mystery, dark as the depths of the sea.

\*† Here were marks describing the width and size of the article sent for.

Friday Morning.

To FRANK :]

God knows, who reads all hearts, that it would have been more than a pleasure to me, to write my wife a letter, such as one deserving the appellation would have wished ; but, unfortunately for us *both*, I am compelled to write in a manner that I presume you will feel keenly. But necessity forces me to the dreadful alternative.

When I became acquainted with you, I had not the most distant idea of ever either courting or marrying you. For twelve years I had *trembled* at the idea of trusting my fortune again into the hands of a woman. When I was informed by certain persons that you *loved* me *distractedly*, I took it for granted, that it was true, and felt a correspondent interest in you on that account ; your valentine pleased me, and when I found that you were the writer, its style, &c., had a great effect in making a favorable impression on my mind. But I will go no further, but just notice what occurred before we were engaged. On *knees*—you kneeling also—I told you with tears in my eyes, the story of my *sufferings*—pointed out all the causes of my separation with my first wife—warned you again and again, of the tremendous responsibility you were about to take upon you at your age, showed you the difference between our ages, and the almost utter impossibility of so young a person being capable of making a fit companion for me, and that it was almost equally impossible, allowing that she now loved me, of that love's continuing. I told you plainly, how singular I was in my habits ; what I would expect from a *wife*—and everything, in a word, an honest man ought to say, on the eve of so serious a matter as marriage. I implored you, at your feet, interrupted by sobs, to ponder the matter *well*—to search your heart to the core, and not to deceive me at your peril—declared most distinctly, that to be unhappy the second time, would be my death, and that, if you ever made me so, it would be better then to stab me to the heart. I even went further—indeed, perhaps, further than any mortal man ever went before, with a lady—and before I gave myself to you, I commissioned Mr. Green to *sound* you to the very quick—to proceed as I had done in the matter, and to point out everything clear, fair, open, and aboveboard. To him, first, you most solemnly vowed that you *loved* me devotedly—distractedly, and forever ! and that nothing under the heavens, on your part, should be left undone to make me a happy man ; and before I uttered that word seemed to make you happy, you made similar, only that more fervent *vows* to me of the same import, appealing to God for your sincerity. And, on these conditions, feeling that I loved you, and could, and would endeavor to make you happy as my wife, we became engaged. We were married—and what has followed ? Has Frank kept one of her vows ? her solemn, but repeatedly spoken, and sworn vows ? Let facts answer. When I left you, I told you it was my wish for you not to visit, or go abroad alone, without your mother, or some person older than yourself. You solemnly promised, and said my will was your law. Did you keep your word ? No ; far from it. There are several little matters connected my absence, that tended greatly to injure your character, and hurt my influence. Your rebelling against your mother's interference with a girl of seventeen ; your appearing in the streets of both cities alone, in a gay and flaunting manner, visiting about, and staying out late at night—all calculated to lead the sober and thinking part of the community to censure you. You also promised me, that you would practice day and night to accomplish yourself on the piano, and, at least, to play one tune for me on my return. Did you do so ? No, verily. You made but little advances, and neglected practice almost entirely, save when your teacher was present. I know you will be angry with my *plainness*, but wait till you read my whole communication, and don't treat it disrespectfully at your peril. I am in earnest, and I am not, with all my love, a man to be trifled with, when I am in earnest, and my mind made up.

On my return from P., I found you from home late at night, and when your mother spoke to you of the impropriety of doing so, you gave her, the first time in my hearing, sharp answers—unbecoming a lady and a child. You soon began to open your character to me, and to show points I never dreamed you possessed. You pouted at every word I said, in shape of counsel. You then began to give insulting answers—or none at all. You convinced me soon that you were not the person I thought I had married ; indeed, I saw that plainly, before I left you first. Instead of a tender, affectionate, and kind wife, willing to sacrifice her own pleasure for her husband's comfort, you evinced a perfect indifference to all my wants ; if sick, you never attempted to nurse me, or to show any tenderness of heart ; on the contrary, you selfishly sought your own comfort, and acted evidently, perhaps without design, as though bereft of feeling—just as a heartless woman would do. This *trait* you have preserved in all our intercourse, and most especially while in Islip.

Your manner in company and out of company is alike, pretty much, and if I must speak out, is vulgar, careless, haughty, and forward—eschewing all those little delicate traits, so beautiful in woman ; and if I dared to mark them, or point out the improvement necessary, you would either tell me I was scolding, or insult me by your impudent and improper manner of speaking to me, or by an indifference and a silence far worse, and more calculated to wear out one's patience.



Instead of being industrious and prudent, as all ladies are, you refused to sew, and distinctly declared to me you knew nothing about dressmaking, and, as you said before marriage, you never learned it, when it seems, from good authority, you had, and knew all about it. What did, or does all of this mean? I forbear comment. Your *careless, lazy*, hanging-about manner in your room, and about house, especially in the forepart of the day, taking it all together, is very *reprehensible*, and worthy of serious rebuke, and you cannot deny it. The manner in which you abuse your dresses, throw about your clothes, tear and rip about, destroying everything in your way, all are among the items of conduct which disgust a gentleman; more than anything else in a lady—especially a wife.

Instead of showing consideration for your grandmother, and conciliating her, your neglect of her, and Walter, and Cal, and indeed of all your relations, with your most impudent and insulting way to them all, is, to say the least of it, among the worst points that I dislike in F.

Your behavior to gentlemen—anything but dignified, taking their rings and wearing them, and sometimes even their watches, and your choosing their society rather than mine, I also demur at—though not *jealous*, as you have said and hinted several times. I am *jealous*, it is true, but it is of my wife's character and reputation, and my own also. But to enumerate all the items would be too great a task; now to the point. And first, your husband has made up his mind, and settled the question, and laid down certain principles by which he means to abide, and they are like the laws of the Medes and Persians—they cannot be altered. No power, save God's, will change my firm determination to abide by the plan laid down on this paper. Choose now your course.

Then first: Frank will have, no matter how hard it is to come to it—she will have, I repeat it, to change her whole course of conduct with me, and to pursue a path widely different from the one which she has presumed to take. She will have to turn learner, and to hearken to advice, and to be respectful—*mild*, unassuming, industrious, retiring and respectful. I shall never return to F.; die first I will—travel to the ends of the earth from her, rather than live as I have done for the last few weeks; never, never; so help me my Heavenly Father, and keep me faithful.

And now, if you will accede to the following terms, not carelessly, but seriously—not to break them the next moment, I will remain with you, your loving, kind, and respectful husband till death; if not, we part forthwith.

You will ask your mother and grandmother's pardon for your disobedient and disrespectful manner to them—promising never to repeat it again, while you live with me. Second, you will promise never to address me in a cross or pettish manner again, when I am advising you; and, as you are very young and not, as yet, acquainted with the manners of society, you will be directed and counselled by me in all those particulars, that will educate you to appear among your compeers.

You will promise to *learn*, which you never yet have done, to take care of your wardrobe, mending and making, at least a part of every day, and putting up carefully all the articles in your room—learning to be tidy and neat in everything about you.

You will promise to give up your vain and foolish manner of dressing yourself, losing hours upon your head and skin, not your person, and whitening your face and neck, like an actress, rather than a lady; in a word, you have sense enough to do better than you do, and you can easily learn how to please me, if you will. All I ask, is a companionable lady—that will study the duties of a wife, and act up to them. This F. can do if she so please to do it. Finally—if F. loves her husband, he will now have a proof of this affection, by answering this letter by Monday's stage. If she answers me like a wife and a lady, her husband will come to her arms, on Tuesday, please God. But if it so pleases her to rebel, Mr. Maffit bids her an everlasting *farewell*!

One thing more, among the many things which have disgusted, hurt, and outraged my feelings, is F.'s entire and utter disregard of religion, her not even reading God's word, and giving me every reason to believe her profession at the altar of God, before our marriage, was a deception.

I have written the above calmly, honestly—not to injure your feelings, F., but to open your eyes to the precipice upon which you stand, and the evil consequences of your course. I presume it will cut you to the heart to have me write so; but better come to the point at once. It is a solemn thing to be married—but it is awful to disagree, to live like cat and dog—and I never shall do it. Altercation again between us, will drive me from you, be assured of it. Avoid it then in time; and remember, if we live together, it must be in love and union, or not at all. I will endeavor not to be too exacting. I will make all due allowances for your age, and girlish habits; but for bad temper, impudent and insulting language—none whatever, for your age, instead of being an apology for you, is the reverse. If you are so young and girlish, so much the greater reason for your being under loving and proper control. A stronger argument I should think in proof of your coming down from your high and haughty manner, and giving up those *affected airs* which will make you, if they have not already, the laughing-stock of all genteel and well-bred persons.

I have not written in anger—more in sorrow, I assure you—grieved to the heart at the ne-

ecessity which compels me to read you such harsh lessons; but hoping it will do you the good you need.

I will wait patiently your *answer*; upon that answer will settle the question between us forever. Don't for a moment even dream that any *artifice*, or pouting, or hysterics even, or anything else, will alter my resolution, or change my purpose one *whit*; no, not one tittle. Frank must come to my terms—bear to be *advised*—cease all humbuggery, be a lady and a wife, treat me respectfully, and my opinions, or——*Farewell forever!* God bless you.

NEWLAND

If you do not write me and send by Monday's stage, I shall take it for granted that you reject my terms, and I shall act accordingly.

To the foregoing letter of her aggrieved husband, the young wife made the following immediate answer. The reader will note, that it denies not one of the mild accusations with which he charged her. It does not even attempt to palliate, excuse, or color her conduct. It virtually, and in the most solemn manner, confesses every line, to the smallest letter. She yields the whole controversy, and penitently throws herself on the mercy of her offended lord. And to our understanding, it proves beyond question, that the writer was clearly, and from the outset of the hymeneal difficulty, altogether in the wrong, and in her calmer moments, conscious of the fact.

MY DEAR HUSBAND:

I received your letter last night, and was much pained on perusing it. You must forgive me, indeed you must, for troubling you so. You expected I would be angry, but indeed I am not. No, my husband, I feel deeply that I have done wrong in acting as I have done, and I will try, from this time forth, to act according to your advice, and to amend my ways. I feel I do not know myself as well as I should. I never intended to treat you crossly, but, some way or other, I do it without meaning.

You must help me, my Newland, to learn my own character, and to improve it. I wish—most fervently wish—I was the woman you desire; but I now know that I am not the right sort of a woman for Mr. Maffit's wife. But oh, I did not intend to deceive you, indeed I did not, when I married you. I thought I could make you happy; we did not know each other; I did not know myself. It was my firm determination, so help me heaven, to endeavor to make you happy, and I put too much reliance on my own strength; but I never intended to deceive you; no, never. God knows my sincerity, when at the altar. I experienced a change of heart, and, for a time, was very happy; I had no thoughts of marrying you at that time, but when that was talked of, the excitement attending it, made me forget my religion—made me loose my love of devotion, which, before, was so sweet.

But still, I think I should have regained those feelings, had I but have been with you, to counsel and direct me, for then my heart was softened; but left to myself, as I then was, I lost all love for religion—a sort of forgetfulness stole over me upon the subject of heaven, and gradually I ceased to read my bible; ceased—oh, shall I say it—to love God as I should.

But forgive me, my husband, again I say, forgive me, for paining you as I have done. Pray for me, that I may be enabled to follow your directions, for I feel now, although I did not think so at first, that I shall never make you as happy as you might be; but I will try, and pray to heaven to assist me to do so. You will forgive me, but I speak from my heart. Come home on Tuesday without fail, and teach me to do as you wish. God bless you, my dear Newland, I wish I was older, and more fitted to make you happy; but I will try.

Your unhappy wife,

F.

By comparing these two documents alone, and without any other evidence, *alinde*, every intelligent person can *evolve*, for himself, every leading fact in any way connected with the *gist* of the case; and if we are not miserably mistaken the following may be laid down:—1. The real causes of the dissension, were a decent pride and becoming vanity in the husband,—and untamable levity and giddy flirtation in the wife. 2. That the most captious critic in the branch of matrimonial ethics can find nothing to censure, on the part of Maffit, who seems to have endured much and only murmured when his own dignity and the character, if not the virtue of his wife, were placed in imminent peril. 3. That the young girl, Frances Smith, belonged to that large class of wavering natures, so accurately described by Dr. George Combe, as “eternally vacillating between sin and repentance;” in a philosophic as well as poetical sense,—*pendulums* betwixt an erring smile and transitory tear. In other words, she might not be actually “false;” but was certainly, “fickle,” beyond the possibility of endurance or any hope of amendment.

On the reception of her answer, so full of sadness and contrition, yet with promising amendment in a voice so feeble, Maffit, willing still to hang his hopes on the trembling point of a needle, rather than renounce the ideal intoxication of that delusive dream, flew on the

bright wings of joyous love to the arms of the seeming penitent. They were re-united, and lived several months longer together.

The history of their final separation was briefly this: Mr. Maffit had just returned from a professional journey. He arrived in the cars from Philadelphia, at 11 o'clock at night. He hastened to Miss Smith's boarding house, and eagerly seeking his wife, attempted to greet her with the usual affectionate kiss. She repulsed him coldly, rushed from the room, and refusing his proffered company, went all the way alone to her mother's, in Brooklyn, *one hour before midnight!*

She returned, but once again; and then only when she knew her husband was absent. She went to the mistress of the mansion and asked her for the key to Mr. Maffit's room. The landlady declined giving it up in his absence, after what had happened. The incensed and revengeful wife was not, however, to be defeated in her vindictive purpose. She obtained a key that would fit from another border: broke open her husband's trunks and drawers, and abstracted a number of his private papers! On his return, Maffit was almost distracted at the event. Such is Miss Smith's account of the matter. The reader will now see from what source the Police Gazette has obtained some of its *previous* documents. They were *parloined*. Would not he who scruples not to *use* letters thus *stolen*, take them himself, in the same way, if opportunity were favorable!

Thus as we abridged the statements and proofs of the prosecution from the Police Gazette, we have epitomized those of the defence from the Sunday Morning News, giving the whole in our own language, so as to avoid unbecoming words. We shall close the chapter with a brief *critique*, as to both sides of the controversy, and a succinct exposition of the case as it is.

We remark, in the first place, that Maffit's character, as sketched in the vehement columns of the Police Gazette, is to our minds an utter impossibility. Such *moral monsters*, fiends incarnate, without one redeeming feature or quality of merit may do very well for fiction, to consort with ghosts and fairies, and other bubbles of a seething brain, and distempered imagination; but nature disowns the entire brood. Total, unmitigated depravity belongs not to the realms of reality; it is the *ideal* of an internal dream. There is no such thing as *total* darkness or perfect light, in the moral, human, any more than in the material, physical sphere. A late analysis, of the *solar spectrum*, shows us streaks of shadow, in the purest sunbeam, and there is no night of tempestuous gloom so dark, that a few pale, though, perhaps, invisible rays from those "immortal lights," will not pierce through its veil of clouds. In like manner, as there is no heart so stainless-free from error and sin, as not to need protection by the mantle of divine charity, so there may not be found within view of the all-seeing sun, a creature wearing humanity's meanest, most degraded form, altogether destitute of humanity's feelings. This is our metaphysical faith, a creed confirmed by all experience.

In truth, the editor of the Police Gazette has contracted so inveterate a habit of drawing pictures to appall—the bloody portraits of thieves and murderers, throwing on the horrible canvases masses of the blackest shadow—that we may suppose he has nearly forgotten that there is such a thing as light in the universe. If the world were really as bad as he and his compeers represent it, it would take fire by spontaneous combustion, and made a hell without the aid of burning brimstone! Such men's occupation exorcises a most deliterious influence on their faith and feelings; thus jailers and executioners, those butchers of the social state, are proverbially cruel. The *hangmen* of literature are not to be trusted.

But in sober earnest, can any reader without the walls of a Lunatic Asylum really believe, that the most incurable drunkard, the most abandoned rake, blasphemer, hypocrite, demon, condemned beyond the hope of redemption, could carry on his atrocious villainies, debauchery, and seduction; for full one-third of a century, not in obscurity, or amidst the favorable opportunities afforded by large cities, but all over the country, from Maine to Georgia, in the gaze of the public eye, and watched by one of the strictest religious sects, of whom he was all the while a minister and member; and that not one of his countless victims, or attempted victims, actuated by conscience or revenge, should never step forward to unmask the loathsome pretender—that not one particle of tangible evidence, touching his enormous guilt, should ever leak out; and all this while assailed by whole hosts of spiteful foes, in the bosom of his own church as well as in the world?

To say the least of it, it would require the strongest proof to overcome the antecedent improbability of such a hypothesis. The question then suggests itself, does such proof exist? And if so, what is it? It is to be observed, and carefully borne in mind, that the entire testimony rests for support on the authority of Mrs. Maffit's mother and step-father, who are both unquestionably actuated by feelings of the most unfriendly nature towards their former son-in-law. But the objection, as to credibility, does not stop here. For even this evidence, tainted with foul suspicion as it is, partakes mostly of the character of incompetency, called by lawyers "hearsay." The most disgusting details are of facts Judge Pierce and lady did not see, or could not witness, but give them as the assertions of the deceased wife. So much for the authority on which the dreadful story is predicated.

But the chief inquiry should turn on the allegations and elements of the tale itself. To

our apprehension they are so self-contradictory and hopelessly absurd, that no weight of positive proof could hardly render them credible. Let us, by way of analysis, make a short running review of the principal charges.

1. Maffit, at the outset in the first days of his courtship, attempted to seduce the young girl, Fanny Smith, afterwards his wife. Can this be credited in full view of all the facts? If she had been that virtuous, intelligent, and poetic being, such as the enemies of Maffit portray her, after such an insult, would she ever have spoken to him again, hoary-headed saint and minister as he was by profession? Was not that the time for her to shudder at his beastiality, instead of waiting till "the second night after marriage," when, the "Gazette" says, her love turned to unutterable loathing?

2. Maffit, in order to succeed in his satanic purpose, employed the Rev. J. C. Green to lead her through a back basement window of the Centenary Church, to join in drunken orgies during the darkness of the night! Can any man in his senses believe, that an intelligent, not to say virtuous woman, would have been so led? Could have committed such an indiscretion? O! but she was "unsophisticated." Indeed she must have been something more than unsophisticated to have gone that far! The answer to this charge may be stated in the form of a dilemma, from whose horns there can be no escape. Fanny Smith either did, or did not go to the nightly orgies through a basement window as alleged. If she did, her word is unworthy of belief, a trifle lighter than air; and the prosecution against Maffit falls to the ground powerless, unsupported for want of a substantial witness. If she did not, (as we are sure she did not) then the whole story is very probably a mere fiction, fabricated to adorn the pages of the Police Gazette, during a period of dearth, as to more murderous matter.

3. Maffit corrupted her imagination, seduced her volatile fancy with costly presents, gauds, jewelry, and "a rosewood piano."

What! was she *one* to accept costly gifts from a suitor, before troth plighted? In the name of the dead, every charitable mind should deny the libel alike on the reputation of her that is gone, and him who remains.

4. It is said that all other means having failed, Maffit was driven to the necessity of offering to settle \$7000, drawing semi-annual interest, on the tempting object of his passion, intending all the while only a temporary enjoyment, and having arranged with his friend Green for the speedy transfer of his victim, into the arms of that reverend gentleman!

Now there are two invincible reasons why no person of sense can, for a single moment, think of entertaining such an allegation as the above. 1. Because it implies a depth of mercenary depravity, as to the girl, totally incredible in one so young. We cannot believe that at her age she would sell herself to the basest of all shame—accursed *legal* prostitution. Not a feature in her character, light and frivolous, but not venal; not an act of her wavering, sickle, and yet poetical life, can be designated as warranting such a supposition. But 2. The charge involves a degree of stupidity, folly, infatuated madness on the part of Maffit, that, if true, would totally exculpate him from every shadow of blame, under the plea of mental insanity. What! would the cunning hypocrite, who had succeeded in deceiving at least ten millions of enlightened people, the grey-haired rake, sated with the achievements of a long life of triumphant seductions—say rather the matchless orator, in the full maturity of his fame, pay \$7000 out of "a fortune won by ceaseless toils, for the possession of a young girl, intending to cast her off the first opportunity, but knowing that he must remain saddled with a burdensome bond, that he could not possibly avoid? Would he not, to the contrary, on discovering the immense cost of such a sensual speculation, say with the great Demosthenes on an occasion somewhat similar: "I will not buy repentance so dear?" The improbability is still more violent as to Elder Green. Acquainted, as he was, with the virtuous reputation of the girl, would he, would any man in the world, be fool enough to stand security on such a bond, with the hope of so exceedingly uncertain a *contingent remainder*?

5. "Eleven days after his marriage, already weary of his wife, Maffit left her for Pittsburg, having previously arranged it with Green, that the latter would seduce her in his absence."

More preposterous than ever. Would an old profligate, weary of a young and beautiful wife in eleven days—a wife for whom he had manifested such ungovernable passion as to load himself with a debt of \$7000? And why should he wish Green to seduce her? Does any one answer to get rid of the \$7000 bond? How could that accomplish such a result? Can it be supposed that Elder Green *would or dared* avow such a damning deed, even if successful? And what reason had they to presume, that the lady who had *resisted* all the arts of Maffit, "gold watch," "rosewood piano," "midnight orgies," *et cetera*, would yield, without a parley to Mr. Green?

6. Lastly, it is urged, "that four clergymen held a caucus to devise a scheme to render the ante-nuptial bond null and void; when it was resolved to put in circulation slanderous reports against her reputation."

But how, in the name of Solomon, it may be asked, would slanders, though black as the darkest smoke of Hades, tend to nullify that bond? The matter could only be adjudicated, in a regular suit at law where rumor cannot be given in evidence. This charge is, therefore, destitute of the least degree of probability. Had it been alleged that false witnesses had un-

dertaken to prove positive incontinence on the wife's part the tale might have sounded plausible, if nothing more. The fabricators of the contradictory fiction, in their blind fury, must have forgotten the cardinal canon of the great Father of Criticism,—“that, in story-telling,” (and we might add, all sorts of lie-making,) “impossibilities that are probable should be preferred to improbabilities that are possible.”

Those who indite libels should be men of consummate genius. Truth is ever consistent with itself. Turn it which way you will, it is always the right side up. It is round, like a circle. It is bright all over, like the sun. But falsehood is repugnant and contradictory even to itself. It is suicidal. Defamation is a strange dagger. The point is poisoned and cuts deep into the soul of its victim. But the handle is a thousand fold more dangerous, and inflicts a wound immedicable on the hand and heart of him who wields it.

Thus we see, that the bill of indictment presented against Maffit, in the pages of the Police Gazette, is loaded with intrinsic improbability, so great, as scarcely to admit of confirmation, by any quality, or quantity, of testimony, while a searching inquiry utterly fails to elicit one iota of substantial proof. On the other hand, can we repose blind and implicit confidence in the *allegata* and eulogistic statements of the counsel for the defence? And more particularly are we to receive, without many grains of allowance, the recriminative innuendoes in relation to the former demeanor of the *dead*? These, to be sure, are put forth with extreme and cautious delicacy, more in the way of subtle implication, than of open assertion. But the real question must be, are they true? We have abundant evidence to satisfy us that they are not. And now, having detailed at considerable length, the two notorious versions of the tragic story, we proceed to state the case as it originally was: and here we are admonished by our publishers to use the utmost brevity, as the predetermined space is nearly filled up.

The truth, then, appears to have been simply this:

In its commencement, the affair was one of pure, passionate love—a flash of that celestial flame that every heart is supposed to feel, one time, at least in life, and which once felt, can never afterwards be forgotten, while memory has one fibre rooted in the past, or imagination has one hope to waft o'er the future. It was love, self-sacrificing, soul-absorbing love, that feathered fancy, with streaming plumes of the rainbow, and veiled the eyes of sober reason, with a bandage bright as starlight, but impervious as the mantle of aboriginal Chaos. It was love at first sight, that dim, strange, mysterious something that comes, we know not why or whence; sudden as the lightning, inebriant as the taste of an immortal julep, fresh brewed for the lips of angels. It was a magnetic attraction, a poetic fascination, a deep dream of the heart while the head half slumbered, or only awoke to think of fairy phantoms!

The two were just the beings to be caught in the glittering snare of such a delusive passion. He—a child of wayward genius, nurtured on novels, wrapped in gorgeous reveries, with thoughts dipped in diamond clouds: in whose soul fancy supplied the place of judgment, and who had tampered with strong excitements till stimulus had grown a fixed necessity of his ardent nature; but who, more than all panted, prayed, yearned with unquenchable thirst, for communion with a kindred spirit, to lay his head on a trusting, affectionate, bright and beautiful bosom, and say, “Lo! the heart beneath is mine—and mine only!” And she—young, vain, romantic, a worshipper of dress, a votress of fashion, who longed for a male, whom all would praise, and of whom she could therefore be proud, as of a rich mantle, or radiant gem. Besides, she possessed much inherent poetry, with all the erring wildness of that peculiar temperament, which is oftener a curse than a blessing to its possessor.

Nothing could be conceived as more probable, than that two such beings should fall in love with each other on first acquaintance, if not at first sight. He would likely love her as a thing of beauty—a visionary madonna—a memento of the seraph assemblies he was so fond of painting in his sermons. At the outset, it would be unmingled admiration; the same sort of attraction he would experience towards a planet of extraordinary brilliance, or a vaport with dazzling edges, or a pearl of the purest water. But if he knew, or even surmised that the interesting creature had conceived a passion for him, then the man's vanity would begin to act vehemently; the fountains of pathos and pity, would pour out; a myriad of varied dreams would come back again; a host of faded hopes would revive; he would clothe her form in the halo of a light flung from his own fancy; he would magnify all her excellencies, and conceal all her defects, in a soft moonshiny haze: in short, as idealists always do, he would run mad with love! That he did this, is demonstrated, by that \$7000 bond!

On her part, she would be caught by the glare and glitter of his style, the prestige of his fame, the wealth of his spoken and written thought, so much resembling the pages of the latest romance, of which sort of literature she was so deeply enamored; and above all, she would gaze on him, as the toy of fashion, for he was “the fashionable preacher;” if she could win him, she would, herself, be secure of a position that many must envy; she would be the theme of conversation: an object elevated, a glittering mark, for the gaze of all. Thus superficial, but candid critics will explain it. And, doubtless, these were some of the minor motives. But as we have said there was a deeper principle at work in both their bosoms: a fascination—a spell wild as witchery, that mastered volition and took the reason prisoner. That they both loved earnestly, unspeakably, is settled conclusively, by those two singular

letters which might almost be said to have been traced with the life-blood from the broken heart of each!

They loved; they married, in spite of much remonstrance, from the friends of both, impatient alike to change the ardent purpose of either. Why then did they disagree, quarrel, separate?

It is an easy task for a judgment unbiassed to designate the cause. Excessive love is commonly tinged with a hue of jealousy, not meanly so. But he was exacting; required a wife to fill the standard of his lofty ideal; sought to monopolise her whole soul and body, her every emotion, and thought. As to her, she was a New York woman of fashion; a frequenter of balls, and brilliant assemblies; had an inveterate attachment for theatres, and other places of public amusement. The studious life of her husband grew monotonous dull; she became infected with *ennui*, now that the whirl and movement of the giddy excitements of her habitual former life were gone. She could not but thirst for the strong stimulants again; she wished to flaunt down Broadway; to mix with the gay youth of both sexes, of her own age. This the husband, as a minister and a man, would not suffer. He chided her frivolity; she retorted, pouted, finally rebelled. They seem to have had several fits of angry discussion. He was always stern, but not unjust; she was wavering, repentant, and commonly yielded; but soon renewed her *fashionable* feats again. Friends interfered, (who always make matters worse,) and by the advice of Judge Pierce, her step-father, the wife took the last step; crossed the Rubicon of her destiny; left her "Newland," for ever!

Soon the tongue of slander was busy with her name; but not one rumor can be traced to him. That the friends of each should tell a favorable tale for the justification of their favorite conduct is natural, and probable,—that they should exaggerate, color, *invent*, or *lie*, if you please, might also be expected. But, that the husband, or wife incited them to do so, has not been proven, or attempted to be proven.

And this is the entire truth, as to the affair.

#### THE GENIUS OF MAFFIT.

It is now too late to moot the question, does John Newland Maffit really possess genius? It is unpardonable presumption, even to state such a problem. The thought of it, is a sort of libel on the opinions of a great civilized people. We are no idolatrous admirers of the arch-revivalist, but it has always struck us as supremely ludicrous, to hear *little* men, lights so infinitesimally small, that not a twinkling ray of their *egotism*, or their *envy*, was ever able to struggle through the darkness of utter obscurity beyond the borders of their natal counties, boldly assume the critic's chair, and pronounce *ex cathedra*, with the dignity and dogmatism of imperial Napoleons of the land of Letters, "that the orator of a continental fame, is after all but a magnificent humbug, a petty plagiarist, totally wanting in talent, or in any species of mental merit!" It is as if the evening insect's "tiny horn" should attempt to drown the trumpet of thunder; or any urchin should stamp to still the earthquake; or a broom-straw should essay to stop the downward rush of the avalanche!

What! Can he be only a sophomore, with but a gilded, gaudy, butterfly eloquence, whose voice, during the fourth of a century, has never been a single month silent in the public ear? A voice, which has waked wilder excitements; and received richer applause, and drawn from the inmost reservoirs of the heart larger streams of tears; and been listened to with rapture, by incalculably more hearers, than that of any living man, or perhaps, any that has lived since the days of the primitive missionaries, whose circuit was the world, and auditory all humanity?

It is a slander on the American people, to assent of them so lame a judgment, so impotently puerile a taste.

We admit that the transient tide of adventitious circumstances may, for a while, elevate *mediocrity* above its level, and bear its mainsail abroad on the billows of a fitful popularity. But no force of circumstance, "that unsubstantial god" can keep the insect of an hour, in those skyey heights, where soars with broad-wing, cleaving gate-ways through the clouds, the long-lived eagle of ages. The *eclat* of a sect, the shouts of a party, the trappings of wealth, the lustres of lineage, the stimulus of sudden enthusiasm, and strong occasion, ten thousand accidents that come and go like the wind,—may confer a temporary renown on the most superficial of sciolists, on the most contemptible capacity. But all such pass away, like meteors flitting o'er the face of the Eternal azure, and leave no light behind them in the air.

We have seen such, often and many. The crowd cheered, and cried "A Star! A bright Star!" The world turned to look in the direction of the clamorous adulation; but ere a single eye, aimed from the dim regions of distance, could catch the gleaming apparition, the phantom fire-fly had vanished away into the heart of the dumb, dark night, to re-appear no more. A puff of wind, may set the feather afloat; but the puff dies, and then the feather must fall.

The subject of our present narrative was the heir of no propitious accidents. For whatever he is, and may be, he has none to thank, save God, and his own genius. A poor mechanic, without friends or fortune; disappointed in love, blighted in ambition, withered in hope, widowed at heart,—“the exile of Erin,” sought an asylum in the land of the free, yet in spite of every disadvantage, and against the lion’s teeth of adversity, he made good the battle of life, with all sorts of enemies.

The minister of an unpopular sect; he, nevertheless, attracted the members of all sects to the foot of his pulpit.

The vehement denouncer of sentimental sins; yet the readers of romance, elegant libertines, and belles bright with jewels, crowded his pews, eager to hear, as to read the newest novel.

The Hyperborean critics of the cold North, in whose quarter of the sky his planet first arose, sneered their frosty sneers; but the people would listen. Criticism could not prevent that.

He travelled South, West, every where; and still every where envy assailed his name; but as to this, the masses of millions cared not. They cared only for the splendor of his ideas, and the sweet music in which these ideas found amplest utterance.

Such are the indubitable *phenomena*. Can any other cause than genius explain their evolution? Had his triumph been in a single theatre, instead of a thousand, a different hypothesis might have been obtained. For let critics, and pyrricritics, and all *genera*, and species of captious cynics say what they will, that must be *genuine* eloquence of some sort, which never fails of an audience, while the formal, faultless rhetorician, who rounds his periods with a golden compass, and squares his prelections by Blair and Aristotle, is preaching to the bat and bug of empty benches!

We lay it down as a self-evident axiom, that we are sure must command the assent of all candid persons,—that whoever, during a long course of years, can succeed in keeping his name fresh in the minds of a community, large, scattered, heterogeneous, and changeable, as our continent holds, must be, in some respects, at least, a man of extraordinary powers. The fame that passes current, stamp at the mint of American popularity, can be no tinsel,—must be of pure virgin gold.

The fact of the great Orators genius thus being admitted, a more difficult task awaits us. The next problem involves the character and analysis of that genius in its essential elements, and manifested form.

In the first place, we may remark, that Maffit’s is not a genius without faults. The wild crotchets of his untamable fancy, and “*splendida vilia*” of his tempest-teeming, gorgeous style, preclude any assumption of such *ideal* perfection. We say this, not by way of disparagement, but for the sake of absolute truth. And the observation might well be extended to the greatest names in the republic of letters, the tallest sons of fire in the constellation of lights that cannot die. To designate an example which may serve our purpose, *instar omnium*,—in what pictured page can we find faults more numerous, or of more extravagant dimensions, than in that of the immortal Bard of Avon? Indeed, we might state it as a cardinal fact in literary history, “that the greatest glories, and the deepest defects, are generally seen united in the same individual;” and for the obvious reason, that large natures, are usually, not only equiangular, but spacious,—capable of *containing*; in other words, they are proportional, *large all over*. This is true of the material, as of the intellectual world,—a settled law of universal compensation.

In his common terse manner, D’Israeli remarks, “that the defects of genius are the consolations of dunces.” For the especial benefit of the innumerable members of the great dunce family, we beg leave to relate an original fable.

A little candle, at broad noon-day, once sought to outshine the burning sun of the summer solstice. But its feeble, flickering fires were not seen, or if seen, not noticed amidst the boundless blaze of “the lord of light, and the unerring bow.” And the trivial taper was touched at this universal neglect, and turned pale with

passionate envy, and reproached the proud sun with his faults. "There are spots," it said, "on thy face, great sun, which all the tresses of thy golden hair cannot hide—dark spots, that mar thy beams and break thy beauty." And then all the stars laughed, and the moon blushed, at the foolish presumption of the tiny taper. But the imperial sun shone on, yet still answered in pity, not in wrath—"Oh! thou puny thing, weak child of man's small art, born of decay, and fed by putrefaction, and twinkling but a moment in the chaos of ages, in thy dim ray there is not room for one single spot!" And then all the angels of the stars cried out, "It is true, the brightest sun doth hold the biggest spots."

The ragmen of literature have always been busy with the genius as well as private life of Maffit. And, among the dirty street-sweepings of his meaner deeds and cast-away toys of fantastic phrases, they have certainly picked up many (to them) valuable fragments.

If we were called on to designate, in a single sentence, the formula of the orator's genius, we would say, that in our opinion, it consists chiefly of three equal elements, profound passion, deep intuition, and exceeding strength and stretch of fancy. His whole nature is saturated with the liquid fires of passion. It is this which gives his ardor, inflaming every thought, and hurling forth all his words with an impetus like that of molten rocks, shot from the mouth of a volcano. It colors the thick-starred tissue of his style, bathing it in the purple twilight of a soft sensualism. This passion has but one mode of manifestation—as intense love of the human. For of a lofty, spiritual love for nature, he has little or none. He never worships at her shrine, save when he bows to borrow her image-drapery, to throw around the naked forms of life and emotion. His intuitions are keen, far-sighted, but still are strictly confined within the circle of his idolized humanity—never sweep, as with an angel's ken, the broad fields of abstract truth—never rive open the heart of metaphysical problems, dispelling ages of doubt, with a flash as of lightning!

His fancy, of all his faculties, has drawn the closest observation, as well as elicited the loudest applause. Indeed it is a wondrous agent, which he wields at will on all occasions, and for every variety of purpose—now to scale the bastions of Heaven, and anon to drive deeper than sounding line of sober reason might ever hope to reach—now using it to polish a pebble, till the shivered marble grain shines like a gem—and the moment afterwards to pour a torrent of darkness over the sun, erase the stars from their flag of azure, and turn the moon into streams of blood! Never was there a richer fancy. In fact its exhaustless wealth has been made the subject of bitter censure against its profuse and lavish possessor, who seems to have inherited by nature, the curse imposed by the gods on the avaricious king in the ancient fable—that every thing he touches should change instantly into gold. It is doubtless a defect to robe all ideas alike, in a language of uniform brilliancy, to point every sentence, with a note of exclamation, and deal only in stimulating terms. But still he who can do this, can never be accused of poverty of genius—can never be denominated an ordinary man.

But notwithstanding all this pomp and power of fancy blessed or blighted as it is, by a boundless prodigality, Maffit is almost totally destitute of imagination, that higher and highest attribute of genius—the one which assimilates the human to the divine; and by the exercise of which, man, like God, becomes a creator. We mean by imagination, the sublime faculty which invents originals. This "the Revivalist" assuredly has not. There is not a vestige of it in all his sermons, lectures, or poetry. We do not intend to hint, by such an assertion, that he is a plagiarist, or at least any more of a plagiarist than ninety-nine out of every hundred of even popular authors. For that wondrous power of original invention is truly the rarest of gifts. There are many who can use the common culinary flame that laughs on the hearth and roars up the chimney; but few and far between are the magician master minds, who can call down at a word or a wish, that secret fire which sleeps in the clouds and plays among the stars.

Our orator is also wanting in the faculty of spontaneous logic, (may we be suffered to term it?) He may see as plainly as others, an inference sequent from an axiomatic principle, or a given state of facts; but for the soul of him, he cannot draw it out in methodical thought or syllogistic language. Perhaps during his entire lecturing life, he was never guilty of perpetrating a single argument.

THE END.



